

socialist review

Issue 34

For a democratic and socialist alternative

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UNITE!

\$2

for the YEAR of the LIVING WAGE



Maori Party
Where to now?

Natural Disasters
Political Solutions

Libya
Arab Uprisings

Socialism

Capitalism is a system of crisis, exploitation and war in which production is for profit, not human need. Although workers create society's wealth, they have no control over its production or distribution. A new society can only be built when workers collectively seize control of that wealth and create a new state in which they will make the decisions about the economy, social life and the environment.

Workers' Power

Only the working class has the power to create a society free from exploitation, oppression and want. Liberation can be won only through the struggles of workers themselves, organised independently of all other classes and fighting for real workers' power - a new kind of state based on democratically elected workers' councils. China and Cuba, like the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, have nothing to do with socialism. They are repressive state capitalist regimes. We support the struggles of workers against every ruling class.

Revolution Not Reformism

Despite the claims of the Labour Party and trade union leaders, the structures of the present parliament, army, police and judiciary cannot be taken over and used by the working class. They grew up under capitalism and are designed to protect the ruling class against workers. There is no parliamentary road to socialism.

Internationalism

Workers in every country are exploited by capitalism, so the struggle for socialism is part of a worldwide struggle. We oppose everything that divides workers of different countries. We oppose all immigration controls. We campaign for solidarity with workers in other countries. We oppose imperialism and support all genuine national liberation struggles.

Liberation From Oppression

We fight for democratic rights. We are opposed to the oppression of women, Maori, Pacific Islanders, gays and lesbians. These forms of oppression are used to divide the working class. We support the right of all oppressed groups to organise for their own defence. All these forms of liberation are essential to socialism and impossible without it.

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Tino Rangatiratanga

We support the struggle for tino rangatiratanga. Maori capitalists and politicians have no interest in achieving tino rangatiratanga for working class Maori. The Government and corporate warriors' approach to Treaty claims has benefited a Maori elite while doing little for working class Maori. Tino rangatiratanga cannot be achieved within capitalism. It will only become a reality with the establishment of a workers' state and socialist society.

Revolutionary Organisation

To achieve socialism, the most militant sections of the working class have to be organised into a revolutionary socialist party. Such a party can only be built by day-to-day activity in the mass organisations of the working class. We have to prove in practice to other workers that reformist leaders and reformist ideas are opposed to their own interests. We have to build a rank and file movement within the unions. We are beginning to build such a party, linking the ideas of revolutionary socialism to workers' struggles against the system. If you agree with our ideas and want to fight for socialism, we urge you to join us.

Conciliation or conflict?

The last twenty years, under both National and Labour governments, have been hard for working people.

In the early 1990s National introduced cruel benefit cuts, penalising beneficiaries and solo mothers for being victims of the government's own policies and the tough economic times. Their Employment Contracts Act attacked union organising rights in the name of individual 'choice'. Labour's Employment Relations Act tinkered around the edges but, fundamentally, entrenched the neoliberal order the ECA encased.

Now we face a government promising a new round of attacks and cutbacks. Thousands of jobs in the public service have been lost already. Unemployment remains shamefully high. Workers wages have stayed stagnant. And those of us who currently have jobs don't like them: the Stuff website last month reported that "according to the first of three surveys this year from Leadership Management Australasia (LMA), almost 60 per cent of the workforce either hate their jobs or have a ho-hum attitude towards them."

It's clear we need an alternative, and that workers need to get organised. One central issue facing the workers' movement is a very old one: do we build through conciliation and compromise, or confrontation and collective action? This debate has come up at key points through our history.

Unions

Although the union movement from very early on was class-struggle based, since the formation of the Labour Party the main union approach to industrial relations has been conciliation.

For 50 years between the election of the first Labour Govt in 1935 and the 1984 Labour Govt, unions bargained with bosses through state channels, with the idea of reaching industrial peace for the good of the country. It was a social welfare state and a "mixed" economy between private and state capitalism. In many ways it was a good society, one of the most equal on earth, which is a tribute to the workers movement - but it was not to last.

In 1984, Labour, the supposed workers' friend, fell in love with the free market. There were underlying reasons - the international oil shocks and the economic crisis of the 70s. Unable to find a way to keep business and workers happy, Labour brought in the most pro-business policies in the western world. State industry was privatised, services were slashed and thousands were made redundant.

In 1989, the CTU responded by calling again for conciliation, proposing a tripartite model, where bosses, govt and unions would have a growth accord, and unions would keep strikes down in exchange for small but guaranteed wage rises.

By then though, it was too late. Labour had gutted its own support base and it was voted out in exchange for 'a decent society' - a National government, which slashed benefits and attempted to write unions right out of industrial relations.

In 1991, the CTU refused to call for a general strike, despite mass meetings demanding one and opinion polls overwhelmingly against the government. This could have been a turning point; instead, it was the beginnings of a rout. A general strike could have ended neo-liberalism 20 years ago. It did not.

The basic failure was a commitment to

conciliation instead of conflict.

But the reality of work on the shopfloor is that in 99% of jobs the boss is in conflict with the workers. For the union leadership to pretend they are all buddies in Wellington makes no sense on the shopfloor. Bosses only conciliate when they are afraid of strikes. Unions by conciliating find it harder to organise strikes.

Conflict is the only realistic approach to industrial relations. But this does not mean irresponsibility. It means that union officials should give voice to the grievances of workers in order to give them a sense of control of the union. Class struggle unionism means taking on the long, slow work of rebuilding rank-and-file unions on the basis that it is on the shopfloor that unions have their real strength, not in the corridors of parliament.

There are three basic elements of a class struggle union: they have a strong, democratic rank and file movement; they are internationalist; they are confident that unions, and strikes are a good thing in themselves - for the workers, their families, their cities and the class as a whole.

The strike is our only real strength and organisation is the only way to build that strength.

But it's not just a matter of methods and strategy. The workers' movement needs its own set of ideas and skills in the same as the bosses have their free market capitalist ideology. Rebuilding the union movement requires rebuilding a socialist political current because socialism is the theory of the working class. This will be essential as we move into the future.

Join the Socialists

Dunedin: Thursday meetings, 7.30pm, Clubs building, Albany St. Text Andrew on 027-606-9549, email contact@iso.org.nz

Wellington: Dougal 021-027-171-61

In Auckland: Socialist Aotearoa www.socialistaotearoa.org, Text Kevin 027-480-9936, Joe 021-186-1450 or email solidarityjoe@yahoo.com

www.iso.org.nz

issn: 1175-2629



Why fast food stores underpay and what can be done about it

In January, a Burger King worker was threatened with the sack – supposedly for saying on a friend's facebook page that she was overworked and underpaid.

The employer claimed this was a serious matter because it was “contrary to the employment relationship” and likely to bring the company into disrepute. Luckily the worker was a member of Unite union. Unite officials were able to defend her in the media and in the disciplinary meeting and unionists, socialists and supporters were able to picket the store in protest during the meeting.

The employer's claim was wrong on two levels: the facebook page was private, so the reputation of the restaurant was not harmed and discussing wages and conditions in public and in private is not contrary to the employment relationship – it is an essential part of it. Anyway, it can hardly damage the reputation of the company to have stated what everyone in the country knows for a fact anyway. Fast food jobs are not notorious for their cushy hours and generous bonus packages.

While fighting for the rights to free speech on the internet is important, the fact the worker was threatened with the sack for such a minor misdemeanour highlights the real problem.

Job insecurity

But the media circus about the facebook comment was a red herring. The real problem fast food workers face is almost total job insecurity. Not only is the pay poor, but there is no security of hours in the industry. The most common complaint union reps have to deal with is members whose hours have been slashed from one week to the next, leaving them unable to pay rent or food bills. Routinely workers have to use up their holidays to cover lean weeks when they don't get enough shifts. Workers can be transferred from store to store without any regard for where they live – in some cases having to travel half an hour for a shift as short as three hours. Workers in nine-to-five, forty-hour a week jobs struggle to understand how much low-paid workers in these industries are at the mercy of the roster. The managers that write the roster often

wield great power. They can and do abuse it to bully or favour the workers – as a candid survey of managers in the industry has shown – but more often than not the managers, who are usually working on the restaurant floor as well as doing administrative work, are simply too overworked to write good rosters. The root of the problem is not with the store managers and shift supervisors but with a ruthless model that aims to apply “just-in-time” management to the supply of labour in fast food.

Lean management

The ‘just in time’ management method, or “lean management” was developed by Toyota businessman Taiichi Ohno. It aims to eliminate waste by having goods delivered “just in time”. Instead of having a backlog of stock built up ready to be used, it aims to have raw materials delivered to factories only when they are needed and products delivered to stores as they are sold. When applied to labour in the fast food industry, this method aims to eliminate all unnecessary labour costs. From week to week and day to day, even from hour to hour, managers are compelled to roster on the fewest staff possible. This means workers' hours are not only variable from week to week, they can also be asked (but not compelled) to leave a shift early if there are not enough sales. It's this ruthless model that shapes the whole culture of the fast food industry, where workers are positively discouraged from building a long-term commitment.

McDonalds senior management have boasted that they are an “entry-level” employer, providing short term jobs mainly to people either coming into paid work for the first time or after being out of the paid workforce for some time, because of raising children or being made “redundant”. While store managers and shift supervisors, who are usually promoted from the shop floor, are concerned with running a restaurant, senior managers and franchise owners watch the labour costs with an eagle eye. The pressure to hire and fire is driven by statistics like “customers per hour” (CPH) at KFC that directly relate profits to the

number of workers on each shift, and woe betide a store manager who rosters on one too many. While the academic economists and commerce lecturers sneer at Karl Marx's theory that labour creates all economic value, this is the only calculation managers concerned with real economics are interested in.

A similar pattern can be seen in the hardware industry, as small local hardware stores supplied from central warehouses are driven out of business by mega-stores that combine warehousing with retail, entirely eliminating one step from manufacture to retail. Just in time systems are vulnerable to supply breakdowns but they also sacrifice skills. The elimination of small hardware stores means the loss of local industry knowledge and the reliance of an entire city on one or two sources of material.

Low wages equals low productivity

The dependence of the fast food sector on a flexible workforce means the devaluing of the skills and individual expertise that require job security to develop. Workers in fast food are so poorly paid and have so little job security they have little reason to develop any interest or skills in food preparation and service. But while stopping the trend to hardware megamarts is almost impossible, as this trend is driven by businesses who are compelled by capitalist competition to buy at the cheapest price, it is possible

While fighting for the rights to free speech on the internet is important, the fact Julie was threatened with the sack for such a minor misdemeanour highlights the real problem - job insecurity.

organise unions in the fast food sector, which can provide the job security that allows a shift towards a higher skill base in the sector.

The decline in real wages and job security in New Zealand has meant employers in all sectors of the economy are rewarded for employing more people with less skills at lower wages and punished for investing in training and labour-saving technology. Our

productivity and wage levels used to be on a par with Australia but both have now fallen to 30% below Australia. This is no coincidence.

The failure of the free market

TRADE UNIONS

New Zealand has been governed according to so-called "free market" theories since 1984. Both Labour and National governments have sold nationalised companies like the railways and telecommunications to private companies (after laying off thousands of workers), the government then slashed the benefits that the newly unemployed depended on. The unions, already weakened by high unemployment, were then stripped of many legal rights and the right to strike by the Employment Contracts Act 1991.

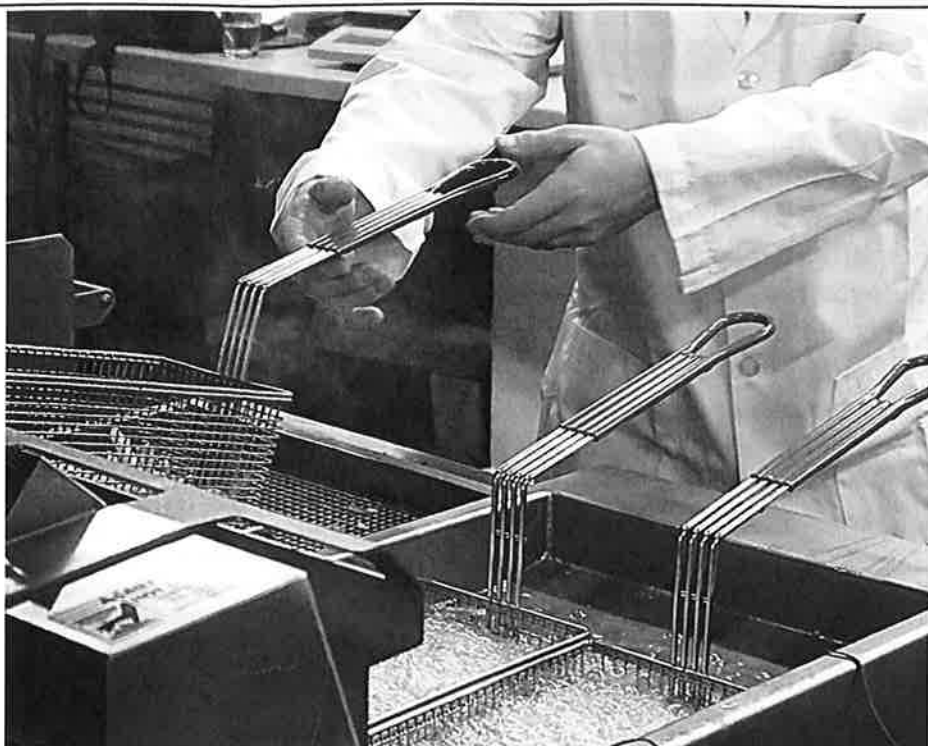
Real wages in New Zealand declined 25% in the early 1990s – a collapse that has never been recovered. The immediate cause was the Employment Contracts Act, which led to a 50% drop in union membership. Because benefits were slashed at the same time, there was huge pressure for people to take any kind of work. Bosses could sack one full-

time worker and replace him or her with two or three part-timers. The result – insecurity. In huge areas of the economy, unions were wiped out as union members were sacked and replaced with casual, temporary staff. While unions have regained some legal recognition since then, they have yet to regain any real power, which is crucially dependent on workers being able to take strike action during and after negotiations and in support of other unions.

Unite shows how to fight

For the past five or six years, Unite has been organising low-paid workers, especially in the fast food sector. According to the leaders of the big unions, this was supposed to be impossible. Unions – in New Zealand and overseas – have retreated steadily for the last 30 years. They concentrate on representing members only in big workplaces and are addicted to compromise – even as factories like Fisher and Paykel are shut down. Because the bosses' attack was more severe than in Australia, ironically, space has opened up for a fighting trade union – Unite.

Unite's basic formula is simple – a team of dedicated organisers, with good support from a small leadership – get out into the restaurants, hotels and casinos of New Zealand and sell union membership – often to young people who have never heard of a union before. The next step though is to deliver. While it is always a scramble to bring in enough money from dues to provide representation, Unite is also always pushing forward on the political front. It is the shrewd judgment of key leaders and their willingness to back up members in a scrap that has allowed Unite to punch well above its weight.



Fast work: *There is no reason why fast food workers should have worse pay and conditions than other sectors. The only reason the companies have been able to get away with underpaying and overworking is lack of organised solidarity - trade unions.*

With a membership one-tenth the sized of the Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union and lower dues, Unite is able to deliver a higher level of service at the shop floor level and win more high-profile media battles.

Strike for \$15

Where other unions have shrunk away from any challenge, Unite actively seeks them out – because it has to. Unite's members are so poorly paid that the only kind of unionism that makes any sense is the fighting kind. When you have little job security and are struggling to pay food bills, you aren't likely to be as interested in changing the government in three years time or lobbying on laws.

The petition campaign for a \$15 minimum wage gathered almost 200,000 signatures from the public – despite only involving about 100 activists up and down the country. Without the resources for a major advertising campaign Unite would have been lucky to gather the 300,000 needed for a referendum. However, the campaign did demonstrate the depth of public support, with polls running at 60% in favour of a \$15 minimum wage. This public support then gives Unite members the legitimacy needed to take strike action to make this the minimum wage in reality.

We can do it.

Because of the just-in-time model, fast food restaurants are especially vulnerable to disruptions in staffing levels. Strikes very

quickly demonstrate to the company the real value of their workers.

Propaganda war

But to win the battle on the picket lines it is not enough just to have a membership organised and willing, from desperation, to fight. The larger and more co-ordinated the strikes the greater their impact, but also the greater the attention of haters in the media. Comments pages on news websites were disproportionately hostile to the union, as the "hard-working" business owners and professionals who have the time to fool around online during work, vented their bile against anyone who dared stand up for themselves. A serious strike requires a serious propaganda offensive as well. This cannot be conjured out of thin air through the use of smoke and mirrors. It has to be based on rigorous research and an economic theory that puts workers first – revolutionary Marxism. Already, Unite national director Mike Treen has written a pamphlet "Right Wing Lies" that debunks many myths about neo-liberalism, but more is needed. Leaflets, pamphlets, and even a newspaper, all act to arm Unite members with the ideas that they can use to convince friends and family and defend themselves on the picket lines. This is the most urgent task facing revolutionary socialists in Aotearoa today.

Mike Tait

Natural disasters - political solutions

We started gathering together articles for this issue of *Socialist Review* just after February's devastating quake in Christchurch and, as we go to press, the long-term implications of the disaster are still far from clear.

Its damage and the suffering it caused are everywhere apparent, though, from personal losses and grief through to wrecked buildings and streets. Our solidarity and thoughts are with the working people of Christchurch.

If the earthquake was a natural disaster, though, what follows on from it are human, and social decisions and choices. Rebuilding requires collective efforts – and decisions on priorities – and it's here that politics matters. Many thousands in Christchurch are still without basic necessities or the kind of shelter they'll need as winter approaches, and there is huge anxiety about lost income and job insecurity.

These problems, although large in scale, aren't particularly complex; they demand economic planning, and the allocation of resources according to immediate needs. Even under our current system, though, reversing last year's tax cuts for the rich could fund income relief for workers and the poor in Christchurch.

National is having none of that, though, and, for all John Key's claims that "everything changed" on February 22nd, nothing has changed in the programme

of the government or its backers: under capitalism, even a disaster as awful as Christchurch's earthquake doesn't change the need for the state to rule in the interests of the rich and capitalists' need for profits. Indeed, a disaster may present an 'opportunity', an opportunity to further attack living standards and workers' rights, and to open new areas – in redevelopment, in building, in work conditions – for increased exploitation.

The 'new' ideas National's raised as responses to the earthquake read like rather old ones, and for good reason: talk of re-introducing interest on student loans, cutting working for families, and further limiting spending on health and education sounds familiar because it is: this has always been National's toxic neo-liberal agenda, hidden from view in the last election because it is electorally unpalatable. Where ordinary people have given to charities in response to the suffering following the quake, our rulers are attempting to use the crisis in Christchurch as leverage, an advantage in their attempts to place more of the burden of the recession on workers and the poor.

Key's announcement that the new budget will cut \$800m in new spending needs to be seen in this light. As if Christchurch's workers will benefit from having their (already meagre) Working for Families cut!

"What to do" about Christchurch is a political question: one task for the workers' movement will be resisting National's attempts to use the earthquake to further a new round of cutbacks and attacks. A larger task confronts us, though: rebuilding and planning on the scale demanded exposes the absurdity of the capitalist system. Unplanned, inefficient, ordered for profit and private gain instead of for human needs and social benefits, capitalism is spectacularly ill-suited for reconstructing Christchurch the human city. Struggling over what kind of city we want to see – and what kind of social world it will be a part of – is a struggle calling into question the system itself.

As a contribution to arm us with the ideas we'll need in that struggle, we reprint here Paul D'Amato's "Disaster Socialism", an article written at the time of Hurricane Katrina in 2006.

Dougal McNeill



Utopia glimpsed in desperate times

The aftermath of a great catastrophe can reveal the capacity we human beings have to reorder our lives in a new ways, writes Paul D'Amato.

It is very common to believe that human beings have a fixed "human nature," and that this fixed nature of ours is what accounts for all the bad things that human beings do in the world today--abuse, lie, trick, swindle and kill each other. It is argued, too, that it is part of human nature for there to be rulers and ruled, rich and poor, doers and done-to.

According to this view, our society is *other* like the children stranded on the island in William Golding's allegorical novel *Lord of the Flies*. It tells the story of a group of English schoolboys who are stranded on an island after their plane is shot down during a war.

"Over the course of the novel," Sparknotes tells us, "Golding portrays the rise and swift fall of an isolated, makeshift civilization, which is torn to pieces by the savage instincts of those who compose it."

Without a state or set of institutions to impose order and morality, Golding seems to be saying, man's default setting (and I mean "man," since there are no females in this story) is brutal barbarism and chaos. Peaceful cooperation, apparently, isn't possible outside the bounds of a disciplined "civilization."

There's another possible interpretation of the book--that it merely describes the naturally acquired characteristics of middle-class English schoolboys living in a world torn by adult war. But that's a less popular interpretation.

I can understand why an author who experienced the Second World War, as Golding did, might write such a book. But it is profoundly reactionary, which might explain why it is included in so many school curriculums.

The argument that our default setting is barbarism is used routinely in the press, by politicians, and by FEMA and military officials, for example, to justify sending armed forces into a disaster zone.

A paradise built in hell

Without heavily armed personnel to restore and maintain order, so the argument goes, a society struck by disaster will naturally descend into rioting, looting and violent mayhem. Disaster brings out "the primitive instincts

of man," such as "fear, fighting, anger" and "foodgetting," according to a 1920 dissertation by a Canadian author.

But it turns out that catastrophes and natural disasters have a different story to tell, according to author Rebecca Solnit in her fascinating book, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster*. Solnit's investigation of several disasters shows ordinary people coming together to help each other and give each other aid and comfort, not acting at all like the children in *Lord of the Flies*.

She describes how, after the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, during the fires that devastated the city and led to the deaths of 3,000, people emerged into the streets and immediately began to cooperate--how people shared things with each other, and rushed to save others who were trapped or hurt, or prevented the spread of fire.

Solnit tells the story of beautician and masseuse Anna Amelia Holshouser, who, after being driven by soldiers to Golden Gate Park, built a makeshift tent and began a soup kitchen, named lovingly the "Palace Hotel," which fed as many as 300 people a day for free.

This was by no means an isolated act. In a city known for its virulent racism against the Chinese, even the owner of a big slaughterhouse began handing out meat free to thousands of Chinatown residents.

To get the flavor of the situation, a lengthy quote from the book is necessary:

"Another policeman downtown that first morning, Sergeant Maurice Behan, helped rescue a woman with a baby and commented, 'Men were taking all sorts of risks to help other people who were in danger.'"

A pawnbroker he saw bought a whole load of bread from a baker's wagon and began giving loaves away to people fleeing the flames. Nearby, an agent for a mineral water company set up a primitive bar out of a plank and a couple of trestles, and gave water away all day and all night to the thirsty crowd. Later, Behan and some citizens helped firemen rescue five people from a damaged building. They were taken to the hospital in a fish cart, a laundry wagon and an automobile--still a rare piece of machinery in those days.

Behan commented, "What impressed me particularly was the lighthearted way in

which everybody seemed to be taking the calamity. All seemed to be merry, many of them were cracking jokes as they pushed along...No matter where you went or who you spoke to, in the thick of that ruin with the fire blazing all around you, somebody found something to joke about.

This was no isolated observation. A teacher wrote that "there was no running around in the streets, or shrieking, or anything of that sort." The novelist Jack London wrote of how "There was no hysteria, no disorder...Never in all San Francisco's history were her people so kind and courteous as on this night of terror."

"Strong helped the weak"

Charles B. Sedgewick described how "the strong helped the weak with their burdens, and when pause was made for refreshments, food was voluntarily divided; the milk was given to the children, and any little delicacies that could be found were pressed upon the aged and the ailing." He lamented, "Would that it could always be so!"

As a journalist who experienced the quake later wrote: "[H]ow nice to feel that no one would take it sadly amiss were you to

embrace the scavenger man in an excess of joy at seeing him among the living, or to walk the main street with the Chinese cook. The individual, the isolated self, was dead."

Military brutality

It turns out that the most savage acts were committed not by ordinary citizens, but by the armed personnel sent to restore "order."

Brigadier Gen. Frederick Funston, fresh from suppressing the independence movement in the Philippines, was put in charge, with the aid of 17,000 army troops, plus Marines, National Guard and military cadets.

Though martial law was not declared, soldiers and militiamen behaved as though it had been. Police and troops were given orders to kill anyone caught looting or in the commission of any crime. Dozens of people were shot attempting to requisition food to help their families and others in need.

In one case, where a storeowner had invited people to take goods from his store before it burned down, a soldier "bayoneted one of the invitees who was leaving laden with groceries."

Solnit's investigation of several disasters shows ordinary people coming together to help each other and give each other aid and comfort, not acting at all like the children in *Lord of the Flies*.

Glimpses of utopia

By Paul D'Amato

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People were forcibly conscripted to help the army in its firefighting efforts, which, according to many reports, was badly botched and in fact made the fires spread. Soldiers shot and killed 20 men who refused to help with the firefighting effort at the waterfront. Many of those executed—whose numbers might have run as high as 500 people—were simply tossed into the flames after they were bayoneted or shot.

Meanwhile, the powers that be were not pleased by the ordinary citizens' self-help efforts. "The sooner this feeding of able-bodied men and women is stopped," growled Gen. Greeley, "the better it will be for the city."

One San Francisco citizen, writer Henry Anderson Lafler, summed up his fury at Funston and his operation: "The stories have but one beginning and one end. They begin with the criminal idiocy of the military; they end with the surmounting heroism of the citizen."

"During those unforgettable days," Lafler wrote in an unpublished manuscript, "the city of San Francisco was even as, a city captured in war, the possession of an alien foe."

In the immediate aftermath of a great catastrophe or natural disaster like the San Francisco Earthquake and Fire of 1906, or Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, Solnit writes, "the old order no longer exists, and people improvise rescues, shelters and communities. Thereafter, a struggle takes place over whether the old order will all its shortcomings and injustices will be re-imposed, or a new one, perhaps more oppressive or perhaps more just and free...will arise."

A disaster is not a revolution, but it can reveal—in a flash that seems gone the moment after it arrives—the capacity we human beings have to reorder our lives in a new, cooperative way, leaving behind the degradation, oppression, violence and corruption that is our daily fare under capitalism.

Paul D'Amato

Paul D'Amato is managing editor of the International Socialist Review and author of The Meaning of Marxism, a lively and accessible introduction to the ideas of Karl Marx and the tradition he founded. Paul can be contacted at pdamato@isreview.org.

Unprecedented flooding

The wetter summer here was New Zealand is only a symptom of what to other countries spells disaster.

The consequences of climate change are being felt globally. In the past year every continent except Antarctica had record floods. In Pakistan, a fifth of the country lay underwater, a massive deluge in Nashville smashed records, Southern France and South Africa have also had widespread flooding, Brazil has had its deadliest one-day disaster because of mudslides from heavy rain and large areas of Sri Lanka are under water for the second time in a month. And of course Australia suffered through an extremely damaging four months of solid rain in some places.

These terrible events are a demonstration of the damage capitalism - a system geared for profit without regard to the environment - is having on globalised weather patterns. The impact of climate change will not be felt equally: some countries will be hit more than others and, within those countries, it is the poor, the uninsured, and residents of low-lying or undesirable areas that will be worst hit again.

Australia is an example of the dangers put on the environment through the lack of proper controls or planning. The damage is estimated at A\$20 billion dollars. In September, Victoria flooded along with NSW three times in the previous few months. Queensland was inundated with rain, recording its wettest month in December on record. Victoria was hit again in early January. Compounding the large increases in rainfall, there were four tropical cyclones along both the east and west coasts of Australia. Firstly Cyclone Tasha in early January, devastating already drowned areas of North Queensland, followed by Cyclone Yasi with winds stronger than Hurricane Katrina, causing immense damage not only to parts of Queensland, but large thunderstorms in Melbourne and Victoria in the south of the country. Then two weeks later Cyclone Carlos hit Darwin, which dumped a total of 339.6mm of rain in one 24 hour period, breaking records. As a comparison, Cyclone Yasi caused only near to 160mm of rain in a 24-hour period. This is further compounded by another tropical cyclone off the coast of Perth, Cyclone Dianne, which is also upsetting weather patterns.

The damage is immense, with 28,000

residential and commercial properties inundated by the flood, and many people have lost their homes and livelihoods. There are underlying causes to this catastrophe, however: if these disasters are natural, their impact is social, and has everything to do with the priorities of the system. The high point of the Brisbane flooding was only the sixth largest in the record, not even being higher than the last major flooding in 1974 and 1955. The floods' devastation was compounded by government indifference, poor planning, and slack regulation aimed at supporting developers' profits, not workers safety. The Queensland government has had lots of experience with dealing with serious flood events, and had many safety measures installed. Since the major flooding incident in Toowoomba in 1974, however, the local, state and federal governments grew complacent and decided they couldn't afford safe and efficient emergency services. Drastic cuts in the budgets of the warning systems and emergency services caused havoc when the current deluge came in. Many residents of Archerfield and Rocklea (suburbs of Brisbane) had absolutely no warning until the water was knee high outside their front door. One resident reported: "I had not received an official flood warning. Nor had radio and television news programs mentioned the dangers facing us residents the night before Archerfield was hit."

The large amount of homes inundated by the flooding shows how little the state cares about the welfare of workers and the poor. Pressure to maintain profits in the hugely expensive property development sector of the Queensland economy lead to lax zoning laws. A large amount of new development in Australia over the past 10-20 years has been built on flood plains - one example is Maitland, site of the 1955 flood, Australia's last great catastrophe. Zoning laws have been abandoned for the central CBD area so that new housing and commercial developments can be built on the floodplain. In urban parts of Queensland pressure by business for high-value land that retains good profits lead the state government to relax laws on zoning, putting many people in dangerous situations. Insurance, or the lack of it, is also a major problem: around 60% of those affected do not have insurance for flood damages. Even those that do have insurance may be disqualified due to the fact that their

shows the reality of global warming



housing was built on a floodplain – something usually unknown to them. Thousands of residents in Brisbane did not even take out costly flood insurance as they were lulled into a false sense of security due to flood mitigation measures such as the Wivenhoe dam. The trust was misplaced as reports of serious limitations with Brisbane's Wivenhoe dam were ignored, levies and other flood protections were not properly maintained and emergency services were run down systematically. Simpler still, many of the poorest and most vulnerable residents will not have been able to afford insurance. Again, the connections between climate, wealth, and profits become clear.

Julia Gillard responded to this national emergency with a \$6.8 billion dollar package to restore damaged areas. This is a tiny sum, though, when compared with the \$20 billion dollars worth of estimated damage the floods have caused. \$5 billion of this package is already allocated to rebuilding the infrastructure of Queensland and its ports, mainly to facilitate the exporting of mineral resources. The mining industry which registered profits of \$66 billion last year will pay none of this. While the government lavishes sums on big business, the \$1.6 billion left for reparations for the victims of the flood works out at around \$1300 per person, a paltry amount for anyone to live on while their lives are rebuilt around them. In order to cover this payment the government is introducing a flood levy, 0.5% tax has been imposed on incomes between \$50,001 and \$100,000, incomes of over \$100,000 will be taxed an additional 1%. However this in itself will

only generate revenues of around \$1.8 billion, the rest of the money for the recovery package will come from massive cuts in social spending on road, housing, health and education schemes. This is a pittance compared to the massive tax cuts for the highest paid in Australia amounting to some 83 billion from 2003 – 2005. The destruction caused by this inundation will haunt Australia for years – especially psychologically, as the poor residents of Queensland have been abandoned by their government. Workers are expected to finance the reconstruction of their own lives, while the super-profits of the mining industry stay untouched.

Combine the examples in Australia with the evidence further afield and we have a pretty damning picture of exactly what the results of climate change will do to us. The increase in temperatures and extreme weather events on record are already staggering. Along with those already mentioned, 15,000 died in Russia's highest recorded heat wave, Australia had its warmest summer on record and both Pakistan and LA recorded their hottest day in history. The US, Brazil, Russia and Australia all had massive forest fires.

Lack of government planning, and inaction in the face of the urgent needs clear to the vast majority of the world's scientists, planners and environmentalists, shows the hubris and blindness of the system we live under. It is ironic here that Gillard's rise to power was in part due to her willingness to fight for the interests of the mining industry, killing any plans the ALP may have had for extra taxes in this massively profitable industry. Gillard

and Labor, like all capitalist governments, serves the very social forces who drive the causes of climate change. When they design these massive deforestation programs, large open-cast mining, or fund huge destructive developments and at the same remove funding for any sort of regulation, mitigation and even the emergency services, they do so at the expense of the lives of the immense majority. In Australia the average person doesn't see the profits of mining and financial institutions which push for deregulation, all they see is rising costs of living, lower living standards and a world that is becoming more hostile to habitation as the days pass by. Those mining towns that do get paid for by the mining corporations exist only as long as the mine does, and even then the wage paid to the miner is nothing compared to the massive profits made by those who own the mines, profits coming directly from the sweat on the worker's brow.

Climate change is a global problem, with large multi-national corporate interests working in concert in every country to fight any ability of government to enforce regulation. It requires a global solution, something our current system is unable to offer. We need to involve ourselves in immediate struggles - for regulation and protection, for relief for flood victims, for immediate reductions in carbon emissions - but, at the same time, we need to recognize the connections between capitalism and climate change. This last summer is a frightening illustration of problems to come.

Josh O'Sullivan

The real history of Women's Day

International Women's Day (IWD) is getting a big plug this year, because it is the centenary of its first celebration in 1911.

But most of the promotions are very heavily influenced by mainstream or bureaucratic bodies, in particular the UN. But let's forget all that and turn to the real history of IWD. This is our day as socialists and as activists within the working class and in movements for change from below, writes Janey Stone for Socialist Alternative, Australia.

Where did it start?

The story of IWD is the story of Clara Zetkin, a leading member of German Social Democratic Party in the early 1900s. Zetkin argued that the working class would never win its battles without women. She raised the issue of special party work among women. Under her leadership a working women's movement grew rapidly in Germany in the first part of the twentieth century, and the female membership of the Social Democratic Party rose 15-fold from 10,500 in 1907 to 150,000 in 1913.

It was against this background that Zetkin proposed the establishment of an international women's day at the International Socialist Women's Conference in Copenhagen in August 1910. She was inspired by American socialists who had held women's demonstrations and meetings the year before. The slogan for IWD was to be: "The vote for women will unite our strength in the struggle for socialism."

This was in major contrast to the bourgeois feminists and suffragettes. They made suffrage a single issue apart from other struggles. But they were also prepared to compromise and accepted a limited franchise. A property qualification would exclude large numbers of lower class and working women. Zetkin called the limited suffrage campaign "a falsification and humiliation of the very principle of political equality for women".

In 1911, more than a million women and men took up the idea of IWD enthusiastically, with rallies and marches in Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Denmark and other major industrial cities of Europe. According to the Russian socialist Alexandra Kollontai "Germany and Austria were one seething, trembling sea of women".

"Meetings were organised everywhere – in the small towns and even in the villages, halls were packed full."

The most famous event associated with IWD occurred in Russia where the revolutionary Alexandra Kollontai played a leading role. While living in Germany in exile she met Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin. She was convinced of the need for special proletarian

women's movement to counter the activities of the bourgeois feminists. Kollontai brought the idea of IWD to Russia and helped organise events in the years leading up to the war. In Petersburg in 1913, Bolshevik women workers organised a large meeting advertised as a "scientific morning devoted to the women question" – this sort of subterfuge was necessary under tsarism.

Kollontai described what happened: "This was an illegal meeting but the hall was absolutely packed. Members of the party spoke. But this animated 'close' meeting had hardly finished when the police, alarmed at such proceedings, intervened and arrested many of the speakers."

Peace and bread

In 1917, deteriorating living conditions had resulted in strong feelings. The major frustration with food shortages and interminable queues had already produced food riots, and the large number of women workers in large factories had already carried out many strikes.

What happened in Petrograd combined food riots, economic strikes and a political strike. And it was all sparked by women determined to celebrate International Women's Day.

The local Bolsheviks knew that the idea of going into the streets had been ripening among the workers, but judged the time unripe for militant action. When a group of women from the Vyborg district asked for advice on how to celebrate IWD they told them to "refrain from isolated actions and follow only instructions of party committee".

But the women decided to strike anyway. In spite of all directives, women in Petrograd chose to protest and strike for "Bread and Peace" on 23 February (which fell on 8 March on the Gregorian calendar). They held a series of meetings and rallies for IWD. Demonstrations organised to demand bread were supported by the industrial working force. Women textile workers in several factories went on strike and sent delegates to metal workers for support. The women workers marched to nearby factories bringing out over 50,000 workers on strike.

By 25 February, the strike had spread to 240,000 workers, and many others such as high school students. Mass demonstrations surged through the town. The following day large parts of Petrograd were in control of the insurrection and when soldiers went over on 27 February, the tsar abdicated.

General Khabalov of the Petrograd Military District summarised the problems authorities feel when confronted with women's consumer demands. He explained that "when they said, 'Give us bread!' we could give them bread and that was the end of it. But when they said, 'Down with the autocracy!' we could no longer appease them with bread". In the Russian February revolution we can see

the key connections between economic and political demands that we've seen recently in Egypt. The women started out with economic demands: that is, for bread. But once they moved into action in the politicised environment at the time, the demands became political.

Kollontai summed it up this way: "The 1917 Working Women's Day has become memorable in history. On this day the Russian women raised the torch of proletarian revolution and set the world on fire."

"Every kitchen maid a politician"

The first IWD celebrations to be held in Australia were organised by the Militant Women's Group (MWG). This group was set up by the Communist Party following the setting up of a central women's department to organise special work among women in 1927. The group was first established in Sydney and later spread to country NSW, Brisbane and Melbourne. They were quite successful in involving non-party women as well as CPA members and published monthly reneed newspaper "The Woman Worker".

The MWG organised a rally in the Sydney Domain on 25 March 1928. The demands were an 8 hour day for shop girls, no piece work, the basic wage for the unemployed, and annual holidays on full pay.

The first Melbourne event occurred in 1931, when 50 women led 150 men from the corner of Victoria and Russell Streets to the Yarra Bank. With the lead banner proclaiming "Long live International Women's Day" they marched down Burke St – the scene of many subsequent IWD marches. At the rally, one of the main speakers was Grace de La Lande, who focussed on the need to organise women politically.

The MWG was the beginning of an important network among women party members and others around them. Here is a quick glimpse at some of the women activists of the day, for whom International Women's Day was an annual celebration.

Phyllis Johnson was an activist in Sydney. In Joyce Stevens' book about work among women in the CPA Phyllis describes an incident from this period:

When I was very young and inexperienced I was very concerned about prostitution. Someone told me where this place was in Balmain, so I knocked on the door and a woman answered and I said, "I've come to speak to the women". She must have thought I was quite mad... There were about half a dozen girls in this place and I spoke to them about equal pay... It's a wonder they didn't kill me, but I really believed that if there was equal pay, if there was economic security for women, then prostitution would be wiped



out overnight.

Anna Morgan, an Aboriginal woman, spoke at the 1934 Melbourne IWD rally where she denounced "black flag of Aboriginal Protection Board" and called for legal changes and access to social welfare for Aborigines.

Anna was born in 1874 at a mission station in north west Victoria and became a domestic servant at the age of 11. Her husband's family had been allocated a farm block at Cumerogunga on the Murray in 1888, but the Aborigines Protection Board revoked the agreement in 1907; profits were now to be directed to the Board with the resident's farm labourers. When Anna and her husband refused to accept these conditions, they were expelled from the station, charged with trespass, lost many possessions and jailed when they tried to retrieve them.

The Catch 22 situation for Aborigines is clearly shown in their experience in the 1930s.

An application to the Board for assistance was refused on the basis of their classification as half-castes. Their application to the Sustenance Department for rations was also refused. Anna's for a Commonwealth pension was unsuccessful due to her classification as an Aborigine.

Anna became active in the campaign for equal rights for Aboriginal people, publishing an article in Labor Call called "Under the Black Flag" and also did a series on Melbourne radio station 3LO. As member of the Australian Aborigines' League she took part in a delegation to the minister for the interior in January 1935, not long before her death. Anna Morgan Circuit in Bonner (Canberra) is named after her.

1968 was saw mass action world wide, not only in France, but also in many other

countries, including Australia. And then in 1969, the moratorium movement against the Vietnam War brought hundreds of thousands of people onto the streets. In the same year, major strike action defeated the penal powers used against unions for decades.

The birth of the Women's Liberation Movement

During 1971, there were more actions, and over this year, the features of the new movement became clear. In May the first trade union sponsored community consultation on childcare was held. In August, the WAC sponsored a national conference on Women in the Workforce and Trade Unions. There was also a demonstration against the Miss Teenage Quest. The pro-abortion demonstration in Melbourne drew significant crowds in November as did the first child care demonstration in the city square in the following February.

And then came the first new-wave IWD march, on 11 March 1972. Throughout Australia, women (and men) rallied and marched, listened to speakers and chanted. In all cities, there was a great sense of a new movement and new possibilities. In Melbourne up to 3000 women marched from the City Square to the Treasury Gardens. Unlike IWD marches for many years, there were lots of young women marching who brought with them a new and less earnest approach. For instance there was a group of women on bikes with tampons hanging from their hat brims, calling themselves "The menstrual cycles". Some of the UAW and older more conventional women were rather upset by this sort of thing, and it took them a while to get used to the irreverence of the new activists.

Women against war: IWD 2003 demo against the Iraq war, Queen St, Auckland.

photo: John Miller

The Sydney rally a poster inspired by the image of Angela Davis, a black revolutionary in the US, advertised the march. The main demands were equal pay, equal opportunity for work and education, free child care, free safe contraceptives and safe legal abortion on request.

So the Women's Liberation Movement took off. In Melbourne, the first Women's Liberation Movement Centre opened at 16 Latrobe Street, and Women's Action Committee was absorbed into the Women's Liberation Movement. New structures sprang up in every state. IWD became the annual central rally of the movement and for many years filled with the excitement and enthusiasm of a dynamic women's liberation movement. From its beginnings in Germany and Europe in 1911, IWD has been a day for socialists and activists to celebrate the struggle for women's liberation. I repeat the words of Alexandra Kollontai to the bosses at Westpac and PricewaterhouseCoopers and to the UN and Australian bureaucrats:

Down with the world of property and the power of capital!

Away with inequality, lack of rights and the oppression of women – the legacy of the bourgeois world!

Forward to the international unity of working women and workers in the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat – the proletariat of both sexes.

(This is an abridged version of an article from Socialist Alternative magazine: you can read the full piece online at www.sa.org.au)

Education and capitalist crisis

The measure of any civilised society can be seen in the way it is able to nurture and prepare the next generation. A society that cannot hand over the same living standards and opportunities it has enjoyed is fundamentally flawed.

In equal measure securing a prosperous future for the youth is the guarantee of a dignified retirement for the older generation. Yet the crisis of capitalism threatens all of this. Rising unemployment and attacks on infrastructure, housing, social services and education means increased exposure and lost opportunities for the most vulnerable in society. A whole layer of young people risk being lost in a vicious circle of unemployment and temporary work, of cuts in welfare and declining living standards.

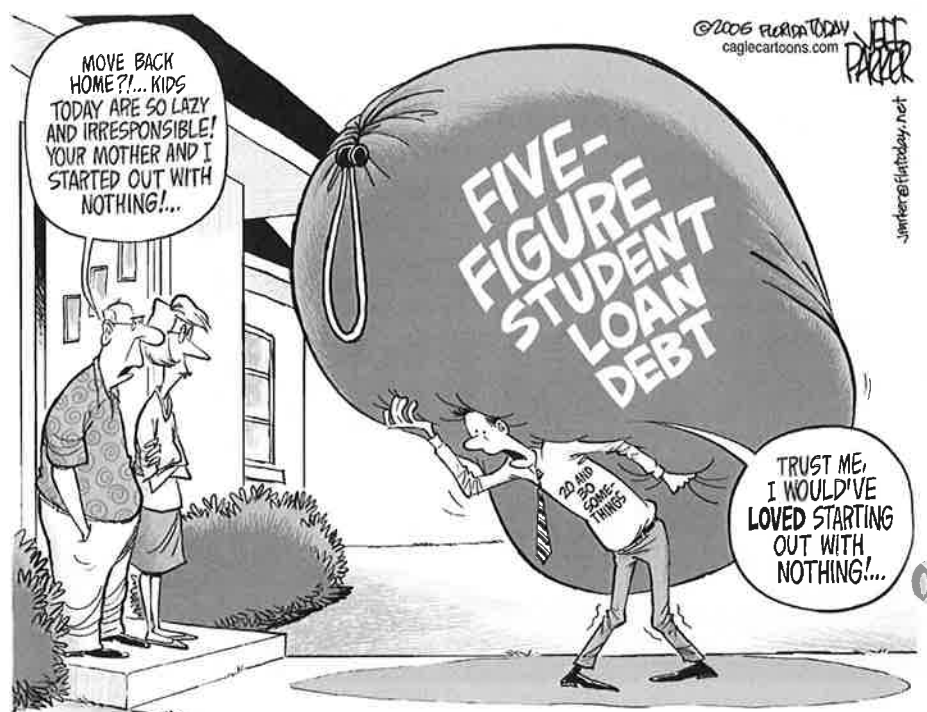
The education system in particular is by no means immune from the effects of the capitalist crisis. As we enter the second decade of the 21st century the idea of well-funded schools, colleges and universities accessible and free to all should not seem like an increasingly distant pipe-dream. Employment upon graduation, without the saddle of massive debt, should be a basic right in any decent society.

Yet in the past few years, full with its economic crises, there have been more and more attacks on an education system already in serious disrepair. Course closures and staff redundancies are being threatened in Universities worldwide.

Traditionally capitalism saw education as a means of training a new labour force. The system determined who were going to be the managers and who were to be the skilled and unskilled workers. In the past, would-be social reformers believed that educating working people was the key to general prosperity, narrowing inequality and even paving the way toward an egalitarian society. However they failed to take into account the class society that exists beyond the four walls of the class room.

A short history of fees in NZ

Tertiary education was made free to all in 1940 by the Labour government. This was introduced because of the pressure of the labour movement and resulted in gains for working people and gave new opportunities to working class people.



This reform preceded work from the labour movement worldwide which at the time wrung a series of concessions from the hands of the ruling class, including the nationalisation of various industry and in the UK, the introduction of the NHS (worth noting that this was during World War Two, when the need for skilled labourers was becoming a problem. Free education posed a solution, paid for by the state – beneficial to workers but also to the capitalists).

Tertiary education remained free until the late 70's when the National government brought in a \$1,500 fee for international students. This was immediately met by protests nationwide, with students in Canterbury carrying placards which stated – "1979 - \$1,500 fees. What comes next?"

They were soon to find out. Just over 40 years after introducing free education Labour abolished it all together. In 1988 they announced an 80% increase on the \$80 "administration fee". The following year, Labour's current leader Phil Goff, toured the campuses as an education minister carrying the message that the country could no longer afford free tertiary study. This coming just six months after Labour gave the rich their biggest tax cut in New Zealand history. He introduced the flat \$1250 standard tertiary fee for full-time and full-year students and is responsible for introducing tertiary fees.

The incoming National Government abolished the \$1250 flat tuition fee in the 1991 Budget, however, and allowed

tertiary institutions to set their own fees without any government regulation. Most institutions introduced their own flat tuition fee, however over time they introduced differentiated fees for different subject disciplines and levels of study.

In the 1990s, fees rose by an average of 13% per year. The domestic equivalent full-time student (EFTS)-based "bums on seats" funding model was also introduced in the 1991 Budget. As the rate of funding per student decreased, tertiary institutions sort to recover funding decreases by increasing their fee levels. In 2004, economists Scott & Scott reported that funding to universities p) EFTS fell by 34.76% (in 2002 prices) from \$11,293 in 1980 to \$7,367 in 2002. Between 1991 and 2002, EFTS funding fell by 73 percent of university total operating revenue to 42 percent. Careful about the stat dump here – gets a bit overwhelming unless it's clearly explained.

Fees have continued to rise in recent years apart from the Labour-Alliance Government's fee freeze for 2001, 2002 and 2003. Fee rises have been back on the cards for most students following the government introducing the Fee and Course Costs Maxima (FCCM) Policy in the 2003 Budget. Fee maxima levels were announced for 2004, 2005 and 2006, and fee maxima levels for 2007 were announced in the 2006 Budget.

Although the government claims that the fee maxima policy is about maintaining affordable tertiary education, this is far from the case when

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the policy has resulted in fee increases. An easily attacked statement – of course a fee maxima system will result in fee increases – it's the rate that is the problem. The maxima levels announced in the 2003 Budget were all set significantly above the 2003 average fee levels, and the maxima levels for 2007 are 2.5% higher than the 2006 levels.

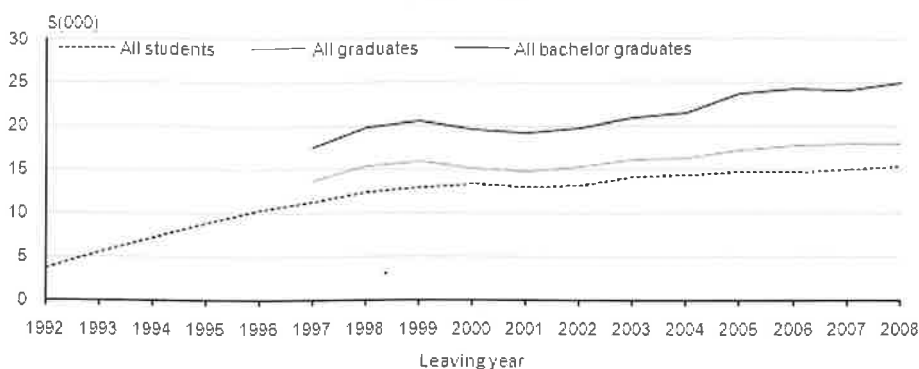
Under the fee maxima policy tertiary institutions are able to increase fee levels, and most have, by as much as 5% (the Annual Fee Movement Limit) towards the relevant maxima. However, some tertiary institutions have applied to the Tertiary Education Commission for exemptions to the 5% AFML and this has resulted in 10% fee increases for a number of students at a number of institutions. Indeed, it is now the norm to apply for exemptions to the fee maxima scheme for "select courses" each

year. The 2004 Income and Expenditure Survey revealed that 79% of students agree that fees are too high, while two thirds believe that public tertiary education should be fully funded. However, the fee maxima policy has failed to address and recognize student

Average student loan leaving debt

By year of leaving study

1992–2008¹



1. Data on students who completed is only available from 1997 onwards.

Source: Statistics New Zealand

opposition to the current fees regime.

Total debt owed to the student loan scheme sits above \$11 billion and continues to grow, with 60 percent having been borrowed to pay for fees. In 2005 alone, \$608.9 million was borrowed for fees so students could enrol. More alarming is that since 2000 a whopping \$3.4 billion has been borrowed from the loan scheme by students to pay for fees.

This in its own right isn't alarming – it can be spun that the govt is allowing students to borrow 3.4 billion dollars to study, which is good. What is alarming is that this is massively out of proportion to the increase in EFTS, and hence means that each student is paying a lot more. This is only increasing.

Joe Llewellyn

Why should study be free?

There is a lot more at stake than students not wanting to pay. There is the reality that many students can't pay and that many are choosing not to attend

University because of the huge debt they will acquire. Fees directly affect who gets to go to university.

Fees, as they were pre-1940, are once again beginning to exclude people from low socio-economic backgrounds. School leavers are weighing up the cost of studying against the "benefit" of a degree. In other words – Is it worth living in poverty for at least three years only to spend years more paying off huge student loans?

Until the late 80's university students were not all middle class. Students whose parents had professional or managerial jobs were over-represented but still a minority. A slim majority of university students, around 52%, came from working class families. From 1991-2000 university enrolments fell and the people who were now missing out were members of the working class. The

majority of students now came from professional or managerial backgrounds. The number of students who identified themselves as Maori decreased dramatically – falling by 28% in three years. For Pacific Islanders it was worse with a fall of 25% in one year between 1996 and 1997. Students from the poorest schools are much less likely to enrol at university after leaving school than students from the richest.

The explanation of this is simple – Fees. The more they rise the more university become a privilege of the ruling class and of the children of the ruling class, maintaining the gap between rich and poor. Labour and National both justify their attacks by claiming that working class taxes were subsidising the children of the rich and middle class to go to university. But the introduction of user-pays has not helped working class families – it has merely added an extra hurdle on the road to university education, a hurdle the rich can easily jump, denying many the education they deserve.

But don't graduates benefit from their degrees?

University graduates often struggle to find jobs and are not well-paid.

The only ones with starting salaries

above the average wage are those with degrees in medicine, veterinary science, technology or forestry. These make up about 5% of graduates. Many students end up doing routine white-collar jobs (skilled workers) on mediocre wages.

A very small minority may gain huge financial benefits from a degree, but all graduates are saddled with crippling costs.

As any recent graduate will tell you, even if education was free and university leavers were not left with a mountain of debt to pay, young people leaving university must still contend with the prospect of finding a job at a time when there is a near universal freeze on graduate recruitment. In the UK, which at the current time has arguably more job opportunities than New Zealand, for every 1 graduate job being advertised today there are an average of 48 graduates chasing it. This, combined with the fact that graduates are not only fighting for a smaller number of jobs, but are also competing with more experienced workers who have recently been made unemployed; means that jobs are hard to come by whether or not you have a degree and a degree is not a guaranteed way to find employment and a good wage.

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So who does benefit?

The real beneficiary of our Education system is big business. Under capitalism, businesses need a large amount of highly skilled graduates – this is necessary for the economy.

Education has increasingly been organised around the needs of business. Many campuses have dedicated research facilities directly linked to major corporations, not just in New Zealand but worldwide. Universities are being sold to the highest bidder. For example, at Cambridge University, they have a Shell chair in Chemical Engineering; an ICI chair in Applied Thermodynamics; BP professorships in Organic Chemistry and Petroleum Science; a Glaxo chair of Molecular Parasitology; a Unilever chair of Molecular Science; a PriceWaterhouse chair of Financial Accounting and a Marks and Spencer chair of Farm Animal Health and Food Science. In this situation the objectivity of the scientist becomes dependent on the interests of capitalism, and their findings the corporation's property. Research is directed at where profits are anticipated, not for social need. As the government makes cuts in education in order to finance the deficit created to bail out the

banks, the universities will become more dependent on private funding to survive. Courses that do not fit to drive for profit – such as Russian studies and Design – are being dumped. Yet because of the continuing crisis of profitability within New Zealand capitalism, bosses want to get their new, skilled workers as cheaply as possible.

Government funding of universities has fallen from 97% of campus budgets in 1987 to well under half of the university income today. On the other hand student contributions towards costs have risen from nothing to over 30%. This was the main reason why the government was able to give away \$3 billion in tax cuts in the late 90's – 70% of which went directly to the top fifth of income earners.

"User-pays" shifts the cost of training away from businesses and the rich, who used to pay through taxes, apprenticeships and on-the-job training and onto their future employees.

In the end "user-pays" amounts to making students pay instead of businesses, and results in the blocking of university and polytechnic education for those who cannot afford the cost of an education.

There is plenty of money for war, for hi-tech detention centres, for handouts and

tax breaks for the bosses. We pay for all this with cuts to public education, health and welfare.

It's yet another example of the lack of democracy in our society. Polls consistently show that most people want their taxes spent on these fundamental services; even that they'd be prepared to pay a bit more. And the polls and mass demonstrations also showed that a majority opposed war. But our rulers ignore us. The only way we're going to win real gains in these areas is to build a movement that challenges their priorities, and their right to rule.

There should be a return to public funding to ensure that all those who can benefit from higher education should be able to attend. Education should be seen as an investment for life not a profit making activity or something decided by the market place. It is essential for the economy and for people's individual growth and development.

Many, including the likes of the NZUSA, believe that if Labour got into power they would lower fees but all of the evidence suggests otherwise. The situation will only change for the better if students and workers around the world stand up for their rights.

Students, staff can stop privatisation

Throughout the world there is a general attack taking place against education in the form of course cuts, cuts in student service and staff redundancies and increasing fees.

This is part of the broader picture of deficits running across the whole of the public sector. The question must be asked: why should students and staff pay for the economic crisis not of their making with job losses and education cuts?

This is a crisis of capitalism – a classic capitalist crisis of overproduction as described by Marx more than 100 years ago. The crisis has been worsened by an over-extension of credit over the last period. This gave capitalism a temporary breathing space after the crises of the 1970s and 80s, at the cost of eventually a deeper and more severe crisis. Today we have entered a new period of austerity and crisis. This is the type of crisis described by Marx over 150 years ago.

Rather than staff redundancies, investment in more university staff is



clearly required in order to boost standards. Yet this does not fall under the logic of capitalism.

All around the world, and especially in Europe, students have been standing up for their rights and fighting back.

Recent struggles at the London College of Communication, where students have gone into occupation as part of a campaign to oppose planned cuts, show that students are already beginning to fight back against the increasing threat of funding cuts, whilst the strikes at the

University of Westminster by the University and Colleges Union (UCU) indicate that students are not alone in their fight for free and improved education. This follows on from large student protests and mass demonstrations and occupations taking place in universities across Austria and Greece.

There are many examples of students in New Zealand standing up before, such as the occupations in Otago in 1996 and the campus struggles in 1999, but in the

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last ten years, not helped by the weakness and ineffectiveness of the majority of student unions, they have failed to take any definitive action. This allows big business to walk all over them. There has to be a realisation that it is not the lecturers and heads of department that are to blame but the management. Lecturers and students must stand up together against all cuts and fee rises in order to be at all effective and not risk putting there education at risk.

There should be a return to public funding to ensure that all those who can benefit from higher education should be able to attend. Education should be seen as an investment for life not a profit making activity or something decided by the market place.

The majority of students have to work to survive and as a result their education is impaired.

In our current university system, rather than producing enlightened, well-educated young adults with independent opinions and beliefs, the system encourages a culture of jumping through the hoops of the examination board and intellectual prostration to the lecturer, ultimately preparing subservient young workers in the marketplace.

When any new western government comes into power it does so preaching the mantra 'Education, Education, Education!' For the majority of people who enter the education system, whether they are now looking for work or are planning to continue their studies, they are faced with a system in crisis.

The whole situation demands that students struggle with workers nationally and internationally to resist the attacks and prepare the way to overthrow capitalism and transform society. The recent university and factory occupations throughout Europe and the rest of the world, show that this is possible if we adopt the right strategy and tactics. Ultimately, the struggle for this movement lies within the student unions, the workers organisations, the trade unions and the party they could create. It is the mass of the students and workers that will transform and reclaim their organisations and then change the way the system can be run.

The present crisis of capitalism has destroyed the ruling classes' capacity to develop education in the interests of the mass of workers and young people. The present generation are the best educated job-seekers in history.

The ultimate goal of education should be the improvements in science and technique and with that the increased leisure time available for the mass of the

population to participate in and further the development of art, literature, philosophy and the many other cultural achievements of mankind. However under capitalism the discoveries of science are not used to further the cause of the human race, but to lay-off worker and replace them with machinery and develop ever more devastating weapons of warfare.

Tom Mann, in fighting for an eight hour day in 1891 said: "...the demands we, as workmen, now make, is for leisure to think, to learn, to acquire knowledge, to enjoy, to develop; in short, leisure to live."

Under socialism, with society under the democratic control of working people, the vision of Tom Mann, one of the founders of the organised labour movement, could become a reality.

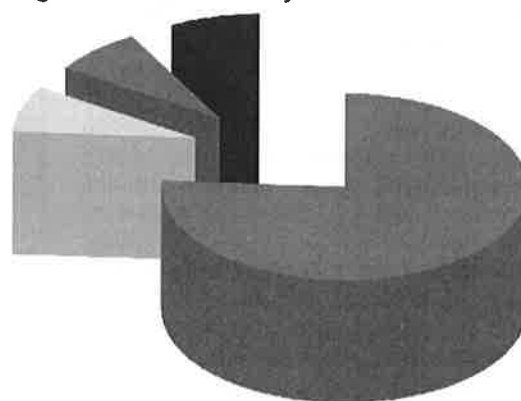
Education could become a life-long process; a tool to eliminate ignorance and raise the aspirations and dignity of humankind to newer heights. Traditionally, in the fight against fees this role has been held by militant student organisations and student unions but

of ■ Ability to write a decent essay
■ Ability to critically analyse information
■ Ability to survive on \$150 a week
■ Debt

OUSA has proven that it is not an organisation willing to take a stand against the university administration on fees, or any other issue. Socialists recognise the importance of the right to education, and the right to a decent standard of living while studying. Workers and students both have an interest in fighting for these rights, and the International Socialist Organisation has always taken a stand in Dunedin, and put the struggle for fees in the widest possible context, challenging not only the administration but the system in which the administration operates. Those who want to be the best armed to fight against fees should join us, and fight not only for a better tomorrow, but for a better today.

Joe Llewellyn

Things I gained from tertiary education



OUR DEMANDS

• **BIG BUSINESS OUT OF EDUCATION! BREAK THE CONTROL OF BIG BUSINESS OVER EDUCATION. REPLACE IT WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT.**

• **NO COURSE CLOSURES.**

• **NO REDUNDANCIES. REDUCE CLASS SIZES AT SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES – INVEST IN STAFF.**

• **NO ATTACKS ON SERVICES – STUDENT SUPPORT, NURSERY AND DAY CARE FACILITIES MUST BE MAINTAINED AND EXPANDED.**

• **ABOLISH ALL STUDENT DEBT, GIVING GRADUATES A DECENT START TO LIFE.**

• **THE IMMEDIATE ABOLITION OF ALL STUDENT FEES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF DECENT A LIVING GRANT FOR ALL STUDENTS.**

• **THE RIGHT TO WORK! FOR REAL EMPLOYMENT OR DECENT BENEFITS UPON GRADUATION.**

• **NO TO TEMPORARY OR UNPAID "TRAINING" JOBS – YOUNG PEOPLE WANT PAID, PERMANENT WORK!**

• **A MASSIVE EXPANSION OF TRAINING SCHEMES AND APPRENTICESHIPS UNDER TRADE UNION CONTROL.**

Where to for the Maori Party?

The downside of being in government with National is having to put up with all the anti-worker, anti-beneficiary and anti-environment (and therefore anti-Maori) legislation that comes as a natural consequence of having a right-wing government.

This statement from Hone Harawira in February proved the catalyst for his getting pushed out of the Maori Party. Tensions between Harawira and the leadership had been simmering for many months, and his intervention in the Sunday Star Times was used by the leadership as an excuse to rid themselves of someone who, by that stage, they had come to see as a troublesome burden.

No doubt this felt like a tactical victory at the time. Harawira has been a persistent and outspoken critic of the Maori Party's accommodation with the National Party. But, in removing themselves of the 'problem' of Harawira, the Maori Party have cut themselves off from their most charismatic, engaging and recognisable MP. This 'victory' – a clear distancing of the party from the activist orientation and grass-roots focus which brought it so much support within the Maori seats – may well prove its undoing.

Contradiction

The Maori Party was born of a contradiction. Emerging from the mass movement against Labour's Foreshore and Seabed legislation in 2004, the party has always channelled two, contradictory, social forces. The result of a challenge to parliamentary compromise, the Maori Party now advocates compromise. Born from a mass movement of the poor, the Party now oversees policies which damage the lives of its own supporters. In appealing to a politics which can speak for all Maori, the Maori Party ignores the fundamental divisions of class.

On the one hand, Tariana Turia's principled defiance of Labour's plans to legislate away Maori land rights brought her enormous respect and admiration. The Hikoi of 2004 was a mass movement, and revived memories of earlier land marches and extra-parliamentary activism and self-determination movements. Marching



Two strategies: Apirana Ngata was an MP during World War 1. He recruited Maori for the Native Contingent – a forerunner of the Maori battalion – to demonstrate loyalty as the price of citizenship. Broadcaster Derek Fox writes that two thirds of the men were either killed, wounded or taken prisoner. "I reckon we paid too much, and I'm picking today he'd agree with me."

with the hikoi at Parliament grounds in 2004, I was struck by another face of this movement; its overwhelmingly working-class composition. Maori struggle cannot be reduced to questions of class, but it cannot be isolated from those questions, either, and it was clear that, in its evocation of Maori dignity, self-determination and aspirations, the hikoi mobilised working-class Maori disappointments in Labour in ways which carried over from the issue of the Foreshore and Seabed alone.

Harawira, with his activist credentials stretching back to the struggle against the Engineering Students' haka party in the 1980s and earlier, personified these activist, street-level roots of the Party. In parliament's personality-free zone, and surrounded by careerists and hacks from Labour and National, Harawira's plain-speaking, activist orientation sustains enormous respect with workers and the poor, both Maori and non-Maori. In his February challenge to the Party's strategy, he made this activist connection explicit:

"Speak out strongly against National's anti-social initiatives. No more of the polite press releases that say nothing. If we can't stop them through persuasion at party leader or at cabinet level, then we need to signal that we will oppose them vigorously in the house, at select committee, at public meetings and on the streets if necessary."

But here is the contradiction. If the Maori Party's origins and voting roots are with the poor and dispossessed, their political strategy and orientation point away from them. It's not just that, in signing up to National's programme of spending cuts and acts on welfare, that the Maori Party have 'sold out' their key supporters. They've also acted in the interests of a substantial social bloc

within their own ranks.

This bloc is the Maori middle and business class, a small but significant layer who have been built up as a result of the Treaty settlements process of the last decades. As lawyer and activist Annette Sykes observed in her Bruce Jesson lecture last year:

"The same period [the 1980s] saw the rise of a Maori elite within the process of litigating,

Negotiating and then implementing Treaty settlements, many of whom have become active sycophants of the broader neoliberal agenda which transfers a limited subset of publicly owned assets and resources into the private ownership of corporations to settle the injustices that have been inflicted upon hapu and iwi Maori.

An aura has built up around these Iwi leaders who, in tandem with the Maori Party, are now treated as the authorised voices of all Maori. But I am actively involved in all these issues and even I don't know who they are and where their mandate comes from on particular issues, let alone who they are accountable to and how."

Just as with wealthy Pakeha, this class of wealthy and powerful Maori have very different needs and interests to the workers and poor who voted for the Maori Party. It's instructive here that, for whatever its many faults, Maori identification with Labour as a party of labour remains high; polls after the election showed most Maori Party supporters preferred a coalition with Labour, the traitors of 2004's Foreshore and Seabed Act, to one with National, and Labour's party vote held up in all Maori seats in 2008. For the wealthy of

TINO RANGATIRATANGA

the new Maori middle class, however – forces represented as much by National's Hekia Parata as by any Maori Party MP – the time for the return of the 'traditional' party of capital had come.

It's small wonder, then, that these forces dislike Harawira and all he stands for. The same neoliberal policies which have formed and enriched a Maori elite have produced entrenched poverty and deprivation amongst the majority of Maori. According to the Department of Labour, Maori unemployment was 13.7% in the year to December 2010, 5 percentage points higher than what it was five years ago, and twice that of the general population. 18.8% of Maori males and 15.0% of Maori females aged 15 – 24 are not in education, employment or training, compared with 10.6% of all males and 9.0% of females in this age group in the general population.

Maori aspirations for land rights and self-determination are, though, not immediately reducible to class interests and, for a while, the Party has been able to maintain this contradiction. The longer it is in government, though, the more the demands of its more powerful – and wealthier – social base assert themselves.

Balancing

At times the Maori Party has tried to balance between its social bases, selling Whanau Ora, for instance, to working-class Maori as a step towards decentralisation and self-determination, while to the Maori middle class the policy is presented as an opportunity for Maori providers, in neo-liberal fashion, to contract for state work.

The leadership of the party reflect this contradiction too; although not out-and-out members of the business elite like Key, Pita Sharples and Tariana Turia, unlike many Maori Party organisers and lower-level officials, have no connections with the trade unions or activist organisations of the workers' movement. Turia has activist credentials through work in Whanganui, most famously in the occupation at Moutua Gardens / Pakaitore in 1995, yet at the same time spent years in bureaucratic roles. Sharples, although a substantial intellectual figure and one of the country's major poets, has no connections with the labour movement. In removing Harawira, Sharples and Turia have followed the wishes of the right wing in their own party, and the social base underpinning it. They have also made life easier for National, who can now rely on a more willing



Two strategies: Te Kirihaehae Te Puea Herangi, or Princess Te Puea, did not support the Crown in World War 1. She wrote waiata against conscription - which was targeted against her people - and gathered the men who were drafted at her pa to support them. When they were arrested and taken for "training", where they suffered military punishment for refusing to wear uniform, Te Puea would travel north to encourage them.

coalition partner for their anti-worker agenda.

The ruling class recognises the Maori Party will be that much more pliant now Harawira is gone, and the 'support' of right-wing forces for the party's leadership shows how much tamer they anticipate a non-activist Maori political vehicle will be. The New Zealand Herald, in an editorial calling for the Maori Party to "cut Harawira loose" on February 9 sneered that:

"[Harawira] admits he regards himself primarily as an activist still rather than a politician. He remains happier leading a march than making the compromises of power. He maintains extreme positions that have no prospect of being satisfied because he wants to be in a position to demand better than the best that might be delivered."

The "best that might be delivered" after close to three years in government

remain, symbolic victories with the Maori flag to one side, higher unemployment rates, anti-union laws set for April, cuts to early childhood education, and the promise of sales of state-owned assets next term.

A new party?

The Maori Party, in breaking with Harawira, has made its loyalties to the wealthy and their system clear for all to see. They face electoral oblivion this year and, even if they hang on to particular seats, are no longer of interest to anyone seeking positive political change for working-class Maori. They are an obstacle to working-class Maori aspirations, not a vehicle for them.

Harawira's future in parliament is more complex. As *Socialist Review* goes to press it is not yet clear whether he will form a new political party or stay on as an independent. In early March Harawira told tangatawhenua.com that "there's a huge amount of pressure coming from people all around the country, not just Maori, who want to see a party that's prepared to fight for the rights of the most vulnerable in our society."

Harawira's determination to keep himself connected to that pressure, and to the fight for the rights of the most vulnerable, is admirable, and shows that, as a voice for the poor of Te Tai Tokerau and beyond, he has a valuable role to play.

What's less clear, though, is whether any further party is viable. Coming in a period of historically low levels of struggle, with the labour movement sluggish in the face of National's anti-union laws, and with the number of activists on the ground still numbering handfuls in each city, much of the talk of a new left party seems more fanciful wish-fulfilment than it does sober calculation.

That debate, however, takes us beyond the realms of this article. Harawira's break with the Maori Party makes one thing clear, however: a political movement for Maori aspirations cannot ignore the questions of class. You cannot serve two masters and, if anti-social laws are the "natural consequence" of a right-wing government, the best chances for change lie with those affected by those "natural consequences": workers and the poor. It is here that working Maori can find their allies, and it is to those groups Harawira's attention seems now to be faced.

Dougal McNeill

A "Who's Who" of Marxism



Karl Marx

This philosopher, social scientist, historian and revolutionary is without a doubt the most influential thinker to emerge in the 19th century. His ideas inspired many movements which lead to the most of the world having influence from Marxist ideas. Until quite recently almost half the population of the world lived under regimes that claimed to be Marxist. This very success, however, has meant that the original ideas of Marx have often been modified and his meanings adapted to a great variety of political circumstances.

Marx summarized his approach in the first line of chapter one of *The Communist Manifesto*, published in 1848: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." Marx argued that capitalism, like previous socioeconomic systems, would inevitably produce internal tensions which would lead to its destruction. Just as capitalism replaced feudalism, he believed socialism would, in turn, replace capitalism, and lead to a stateless, classless society called pure communism.

Marx argued that the structural contradictions within capitalism will call for the system to be overthrown, giving way to socialism. He said that the only way in which the system can be overthrown is through organized revolutionary action from an international working class. We are usually taught that change is the product of enlightened, courageous minorities working on behalf of the grateful masses. Marx had a 180-degree change in approach. "All previous

historical movements," he wrote, "were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority." He wrote very little on what socialism would precisely look like because the whole point is for the "immense majority" to remake society as they see fit. He was the first to see socialism as the logical end result of the class struggle that was already in progress. As a result he logically supported trade unions.

Marx's contribution to our understanding of society has been enormous. His stress on the economic factor in society and his analysis of the class structure in class conflict have had an enormous influence on history, sociology, and study of human culture.

Rosa Luxemburg

Rosa Luxemburg was a Marxist theorist, philosopher, economist and activist of Polish Jewish descent who became a German citizen. She was successively a member of the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania, the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), the Independent Social Democratic Party and the Communist Party of Germany.

In 1915, after the SPD supported German involvement in World War I, she co-founded, along with Karl Liebknecht, the Spartacist League which later became the Communist Party of

Germany (KPD).

In January 1919, during the chaos in Germany at the end of World War One, Liebknecht called for an uprising without Luxemburg's knowledge. She viewed it as a bad move but supported it anyway. The revolt was crushed by the proto-Nazi Freikorps, acting on the orders of the social-democratic government. Luxemburg, Liebknecht and a few supporters of the Communist Party were captured and executed.

In her life time Rosa Luxemburg contributed many books and essays to the socialist movement and is famous for writing on the accumulation of capital; against reformism and bureaucracy; and for her criticisms of the October Revolution in Russia. She disagreed with Lenin's views of centralism and suggested that any successful revolution that used this strategy would develop into a communist dictatorship. Luxemburg's most famous book is "The Mass Strike", which argued that the general strike could itself lead into revolution - as was the case in Russia.

She is famous for the quote: "Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of a party - however numerous they may be - is no freedom at all. Freedom is always the freedom of the dissenter. Not because of the fanaticism of "justice", but rather because all that is instructive, wholesome, and purifying in political freedom depends on this essential characteristic, and its effects cease to work when "freedom" becomes a privilege."



Vladimir Lenin



Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, better known as Lenin was the most well-known leader of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Under Lenin's guidance, the Bolshevik party grew from tiny study circles of just dozens to a party with hundreds of thousands of active members, leading the most militant working class

movement in the world.

As leader of the world's only successful socialist revolution, Lenin's contributions to socialist theory are perhaps the most significant since Marx's time. An uncompromising revolutionary, Lenin fought against attempts by moderate socialists to restrict mass struggles to demands acceptable to capitalist politicians, reiterating the Marxist principle that the masses themselves must take a leading role in establishing a more equal and democratic society. In order to achieve this, Lenin argued, it is necessary to develop the political consciousness of the working class and unite the most politically aware workers in a socialist party.

Lenin is famous for writing about the practical aspects of carrying out a proletarian revolution; he wrote many pamphlets, articles, and books, until prevented by illness in the early 1920's. He is also known for being able to adapt his approach to address the most pressing political questions of the time. His Collected Works contain 54 volumes, each of about 650 pages. The most influential include:

What is to be Done? (1902) which proposed that the proletariat can successfully achieve revolutionary consciousness only under the leadership

of a vanguard party of professional revolutionaries.

Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism (1916) which explains the development of capitalism beyond national boundaries and into a system of global competition where disputes constantly threaten to break into military conflict, as in fact happened during the world wars I and II.

State and Revolution (1917) which interprets the ideas of Marx and Engels, the October Revolution's theoretic basis, and opposes the reformist tendency as indecisive in effecting revolution.

April Theses (1917) which proposed the socio-economic need for a socialist revolution.

And *"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder* (1920) – which is a sharp critique of the "ultra-left".

After his death in 1924, Lenin's writings were selectively used by Stalin to justify his own totalitarian dictatorship – an idea which Lenin never agreed with. Writings of Lenin's that contradicted Stalin were suppressed and censored – so that Lenin's final 'testament' in which he expressed his worry over Stalin's abuse of power and advocated his removal was never published.

Leon Trotsky

Leon Trotsky became a revolutionary whilst still a teenager. He became the most important leader, after Lenin, of the 1917 revolution. His most enduring legacy, apart from his theoretical innovations and practical leadership, is that while Stalin was committing barbarous crimes in the name of "socialism," and the brutal Nazi regime was committing atrocities in Germany, Leon Trotsky kept the tradition of socialism from below alive.

Trotsky insisted that socialism was rooted in the struggle for human freedom. He fought desperately to try and build a revolutionary socialist movement based on the principles of Marx and Lenin until his death at the hands of a Stalinist agent in 1940. His contribution was indispensable.

Trotsky's most important theoretical work is outlined as follows:

Internationalism – Against the nationalistic notion of "socialism in one country" Trotsky asserted that socialism could only come into being on a world scale,

United Front – Trotsky provided a brilliant and original analysis of Nazism



and warned of the catastrophe which would follow the rise of the Nazis which would threaten not only the German, but also the international working class. He called for a united front of all labour movements and organisations to crush the fascists. Stalin did everything to sabotage efforts to build a united front against fascism.

Permanent Revolution – an explanation of how socialist revolutions could occur in societies that had not achieved advanced capitalism (had a Bourgeois Democratic Revolution such as in France and England). He argued that backward countries would be forced to skip a whole series of intermediate stages. In other words, the revolution must be led by the proletariat who would not only carry through the tasks of a Bourgeois Democratic Revolution but would commence a struggle to surpass the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution.

Class struggle – A socialist revolution in Russia did not depend directly upon the state or on the productive forces, but upon the conditions of the class struggle, upon the international situation, and upon a series of subjective factors including tradition, initiative and readiness for struggle.

Unfortunately Trotsky committed a serious theoretical error due to his isolation from workers movements while in exile. He declared the USSR to be a "degenerated" workers' state thinking that the nationalised economy represented a lasting gain from the revolution. But there is no need to dwell on this mistake. Today, as we face the same terrifying realities of capitalism his writings and deeds still provide a basis for building a democratic alternative to that system.

Joe Llewellyn

The imperialist scramble for Libya

Arab League and UN Back No-Fly Zone Over Libya



The U.S. blitz on Libya is aimed at imposing the imperialist order, not saving lives.

Military action by the U.S., Britain and France - likely soon to be endorsed by the whole NATO alliance - will likely do little to stop the killings of civilians carried out by Qaddafi's forces.

The regime's military and mercenary fighters quickly adjusted to the air strikes by avoiding large concentrations and stepping up their attacks on civilians and rebels in urban areas. Western air power can't be used in those densely populated zones without slaughtering the very people they claim to want to protect.

But none of that gives pause to the liberal imperialists, who want to bomb like it's 1999. That was the year that the U.S. and NATO launched a war on Serbia in the name of protecting the Albanians in what was then the Serbian province of Kosovo. Since then, the Kosovo war has been held up as the model for "humanitarian intervention" - a war that cost no lives on the allied side and eventually gained independence for an oppressed people.

In reality, the U.S. and its allies manipulated the legitimate struggle of the Kosovars to their own end. The bombing campaign was a prelude to the use of ground troops by the U.S. and NATO to forcibly separate Kosovo from Serbian control, expanding the U.S. military's presence in the former Yugoslavia. Kosovo became the location of Camp Bondsteel, the biggest U.S. military outpost in Southeastern Europe and the location of a secret prison during the "war on terror" that a European human rights official called "a smaller version of Guantánamo."

Kosovo today remains desperately poor,

with 40 percent unemployment and 45 percent of the population living under the official poverty line. It is a corrupt client state of the U.S. and European powers, run by Mafia-style politicians who have been implicated in a scheme in which Serbian prisoners of war

were murdered in order to sell their organs for transplant.

But at least the NATO intervention in Kosovo saved lives, right? Not according to University of Arizona professor David Gibbs, author of a book on Western intervention in the former Yugoslavia:

"Another myth regarding Kosovo is that bombing improved the human rights situation. In reality, it made things worse, and augmented the suffering. Prior to the NATO campaign, the total number of people killed on all sides in the Kosovo conflict was 2,000, approximately half of whom were killed by Serbian forces. After the bombing began, however, there was a huge spike in Serb-perpetrated atrocities, which caused almost 10,000 deaths, combined with widespread ethnic cleansing. The Serbian forces were furious that they could not stop the NATO air attacks, so they took out their frustration on the relatively defenseless Albanians, causing a huge increase in the number of killings. The NATO bombing itself directly killed at least 500 civilians. When viewed from a humanitarian standpoint, NATO intervention was a disaster.

There is a danger that the current intervention in Libya could produce similar results."

The question now is whether the U.S.-NATO intervention in Libya will follow the Kosovo pattern - perhaps with the imperialist powers sending ground troops to defend rebel-held cities in eastern Libya and effectively partitioning the country.

If they fail to do so, and Qaddafi remains in power, Western powers will be humiliated. But if they do intervene with ground troops, they will become occupiers, just as the U.S. and its sidekicks are in Iraq and Afghanistan at a moment when revolutionary pressures

keep building on tottering U.S.-backed regimes in Yemen and Bahrain.

This dilemma led to squabbling in the imperialist camp as soon as the first missiles hit Libya. Britain and France, which had urged Washington to join them in calling for United Nations backing for a no-fly zone, suddenly turned squeamish about taking over the military and political lead from the U.S., as Obama promised they would.

French President Nicholas Sarkozy, keen to rehabilitate France's image as a great power, wanted a French-British leadership of the operation. But British Prime Minister David Cameron, leery of a political backlash at home and abroad, wanted to hide behind the NATO alliance. Obama obliged and pushed for NATO support of the war, which the alliance is expected to support when it meets March 24.

But whatever their differences, the U.S. and European imperialist powers are united in the view that the revolutions sweeping the Arab world must be contained and rolled back.

The Obama administration was initially inclined to let Qaddafi play a leading role in this counterrevolution. After all, Qaddafi, once a pariah in the West, has in recent years been rehabilitated as a reformer, and plied with weapons and handed lucrative business deals. Key U.S. and Western politicians were prepared to stand aside as the repression continued.

The ugly truth is that U.S. behavior regarding Libya differed little, whatever its rhetoric to the contrary, from the green light it gave - and continues to give - to its closer allies in Bahrain and Yemen to mimic Qaddafi and try to drown their own opposition in blood.

But the scale of the massacres carried out by Qaddafi's troops and the prospect of a long war, a refugee crisis and a disruption of oil supplies also put pressure on the U.S. to intervene. Once a few Arab states signed on, Obama launched his war.

If the Obama administration's rhetoric about saving Libyan lives sounds noble, recall that George W. Bush declared that the U.S. was going to war in Iraq "not to conquer but to liberate" - and he trumpeted the U.S. military's role in "empowering" Afghan women.

As Harvard professor Stephen Walt noted, the Bush neoconservatives and the Obama pro-intervention liberals may disagree tactically on how best to use U.S. military power, but they agree that the armed forces must be used to further U.S. aims:

ARAB UPRISINGS

"The only important intellectual difference between neoconservatives and liberal interventionists is that the former have disdain for international institutions (which they see as constraints on U.S. power), and the latter see them as a useful way to legitimate American dominance..."

Most of the U.S. foreign policy establishment has become addicted to empire, it seems, and it doesn't really matter which party happens to be occupying Pennsylvania Avenue."

That foreign policy establishment, whether neocon or liberal interventionist, now seems intent on seeing a "new Libya" that conforms with the same old objectives of U.S. imperialism.

The editors of Middle East Report summed up the U.S. perspective perfectly:

"The reiterations by Obama and his British and French counterparts that "Qaddafi must

go" put Western prestige on the line. So, say events proceed as the West appears to hope and the rebels somehow manage to dislodge the colonel. Or say the U.S.-British-French troika deals the death blow itself. What then? Who will emerge to reconstruct a strong, central state? Who will the West back from among the rebels' disparate ranks?

As the veteran journalist Patrick Cockburn contends, it is likely to be those "who speak the best English" and are "prepared to go before Congress to express fulsome gratitude for America's actions." One might add that they are apt to be the most willing to give favorable terms to Western oil firms for invigorated exploration and exploitation of the country's hydrocarbon deposits.

Whether scions of the royal family deposed by Qaddafi in 1969 or renegades from the colonel's subsequent regime, these elements are sure to be heavier on opportunism than

on popular legitimacy. This Libya would look nothing like the democratic state of liberal interventionist dreams, and quite a bit like post-Saddam Iraq."

Such an outcome in Libya would provide the U.S. with a firewall to try and stop the revolutionary wave emanating from Tunisia and Egypt. Whether Washington and its allies can achieve that aim is an open question, given the fallout from Libya's civil war and the precarious state of U.S.-backed regime in Yemen, another key outpost in the "war on terror."

But one thing should be clear already: The U.S. intervention in Libya has nothing to do with meeting humanitarian goals, and everything to do with reasserting Western domination in a region that has long suffered the effects of colonialism and imperialism.

Egypt: Generals a threat to democracy

Most people will know that the 25th of January marked the day when Egypt sought the freedoms and liberties that its people had long yearned for, Hala Nasr writes for Socialist Aotearoa, Auckland.

Protests starting in Cairo's Tahrir Square quickly radiated throughout all of Egypt, revolution having spread from the Tunisian Revolution nearby. The people at long last embraced the power of the masses and collectively engaged in political conversation on a range of issues – legal and political, against corruption, rigged elections, restriction of free speech and police brutality; or economic, against low wages, high unemployment, absolute poverty and food price inflation.

Weeks of protests and violent clashes between citizens and the police saw the resignation of the Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on the 11th of February. Mubarak turned power over to the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, headed by Mohamed Tantawi, marking a day of great celebration and a feeling of triumph over corruption and injustice in Egypt.

The 25th January Revolution was in essence a fight for self-government. The question is, "Have they now got it?" A significant proportion of the population is still feeling that the revolution continues through ongoing protests and strikes. The Army Council, viewing continued action as a threat to the stability of the nation, has carried out

repressive measures to silence the protesters, one of which was to issue a law criminalising protest, enforceable as long as the Emergency Law is in place (which has been in fact been in place since 1981). This law shamelessly legitimises atrocious acts that deny freedom of expression, a right that was supposedly won in the revolution.

Army attacks students

The Army's recent attack on Cairo University students and professors, who were calling for the removal of Mubarak-affiliated university officials, is deplorable. And with Amnesty International's allegations of torture, including forced virginity tests, inflicted by the Army on women protesters and the detaining of peaceful protesters and strikers for trial in front of military tribunals, the answer to the question posed earlier is – "not just yet".

The not-so revolutionary interim government, made up of a few of Mubarak's old cronies, including

General Ibrahim who headed

Mubarak's 'Technical Assistance Department' in charge of surveillance and phone tapping, even made time to receive the Bahraini foreign minister, Khaled Al Khalifa, while his regime is struggling to suppress a

struggle for democracy. All of these factors should lead us to question whether the Army was ever truly expressing genuine solidarity with the Egyptian Revolution.

So despite the majority of about 77% Egyptian voters being in favour of the new constitution, the disbanding of State Security Intelligence (SSI) organisation and trial of a number of corrupt statesmen, such as Mubarak's Interior Minister General Habib el-Adly, accused of murdering at least 360 protesters during the Tahrir Uprising, the fight is not over. The very ideals that fueled the revolution are under attack, and it is up to the people of Egypt – the people who were in Tahrir Square, the men in the self-defense committees defending their homes and loved ones, the women in the protests – to keep the struggle alive in their hearts, to protect Egypt from the hands of foreign and domestic forces who would love nothing better than to see it the revolution crushed.



Universities in a neoliberal world

Alex Callinicos

The expansion of education is shown in its economic, international and historical contexts; with the drive for the rationalisation and concentration of university research and the consequences for staff and for students.

China, Tibet, and the left \$3

Charlie Hore

The riots and protests in Tibet earlier this year were the most significant since China's takeover in the 1950s. Together with the protests that have accompanied the Olympic torch relay around the world, they have shown that Tibetan nationalism remains a potent force and that opposition to the Chinese occupation is still widespread. But the international left has been divided on whether to support the Tibetan protesters, with some openly backing the Chinese occupation, while others have raised important questions about the leadership of the Tibetan nationalist movement and about US support for Tibetan nationalism.

**UNIVERSITIES
IN A
NEOLIBERAL
WORLD**



**ALEX
CALLINICOS**
with a preface by Paul Mackney

An open letter to people of conscience in the West

by Omar Barghouti on March 23, 2011

I wish you Egypt!

I wish you empowerment to resist; to fight for social and economic justice; to win your real freedom and equal rights.

I wish you the will and skill to break out of your carefully concealed prison walls. See, in our part of the world, prison walls and thick inviolable doors are all too overt, obvious, over-bearing, choking; this is why we remain restive, rebellious, agitated, and always in preparation for our day of freedom, of light, when we gather a critical mass of people power enough to cross all the hitherto categorical red lines. We can then smash the thick, cold ugly, rusty chains that have incarcerated our minds and bodies for all our lives like the overpowering stench of a rotting corpse in our claustrophobic prison cell.

Your prison cells, however, are quite different. The walls are well hidden lest they evoke your will to resist. There is no door to your prison cell -- you may roam about "freely," never recognizing the much larger prison you are still confined to.

I wish you Egypt so you can decolonize your minds, for only then can you envision real liberty, real justice, real equality, and real dignity.

I wish you Egypt so you can tear apart the sheet with the multiple-choice question, "what do you want?", for all the answers you are given are dead wrong. Your only choice there seems to

be between evil and a lesser one.

I wish you Egypt so you can, like the Tunisians, the Egyptians, the Libyans, the Bahrainis, the Yemenis, and certainly the Palestinians, shout "No! We do not want to select the least wrong answer. We want another choice altogether that is not on your damned list." Given the choice between slavery and death, we unequivocally opt for freedom and dignified life -- no slavery, and no death.

I wish you Egypt so you can collectively, democratically, and responsibly re-build your societies; to reset the rules so as to serve the people, not savage capital and its banking arm; to end racism and all sorts of discrimination; to look after and be in harmony with the environment; to cut wars and war crimes, not jobs, benefits and public services; to invest in education and healthcare, not in fossil fuel and weapons research; to overthrow the repressive, tyrannical rule of multinationals; and to get the hell out of Afghanistan, Iraq, and everywhere else where under the guise of "spreading democracy" your self-righteous crusades have spread social and cultural disintegration, abject poverty and utter hopelessness.

I wish you Egypt so you can fulfill your countries' legal and moral obligations to help rebuild the ravished, de-developed economies and societies of your former -- or current -- colonies, so that their young men can find their own homelands viable, livable and lovable again, instead of risking death -- or worse -- on the high seas to reach your mirage-washed shores, giving up loved ones and a place they once called home.

You see, they're "here" because you were there... and we all know what you did there!

I wish you Egypt so you can rekindle the spirit of the South African anti-apartheid struggle by holding Israel accountable to international law and universal principles of human rights, by adopting boycott, divestment and sanctions, called for by an overwhelming majority in Palestinian civil society. There is no more effective, non-violent way to end Israel's occupation, racial discrimination and decades-old denial of the UN-sanctioned right of Palestinian refugees to return.

Our oppression and yours are deeply interrelated and intertwined -- it is never a zero-sum game! Our joint struggle for universal rights and freedoms is not merely a self gratifying slogan that we raise; rather, it is a fight for true emancipation and self determination, an idea whose time has vociferously arrived.

After Egypt, it is our time. It is time for Palestinian freedom and justice. It is time for all the people of this world, particularly the most exploited and downtrodden, to reassert our common humanity and reclaim control over our common destiny.

I wish you Egypt!

Omar Barghouti is a Palestinian human rights activist, former resident of Egypt, and author of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS): The Global Struggle for Palestinian Rights (Haymarket Books, 2011)

Gomorra: When passion is not enough

Gomorra: Italy's Other Mafia,

by Roberto Saviano

reviewed by Andrew Tait

This is an interesting investigation into Naples criminal society, written by a Neapolitan 'vigilante journalist'. It has received high praise from newspaper reviews, was, according to the book jacket, an international bestseller (whatever that means) and a major motion picture. I feel, besides these rave reviews, any praise I can offer will seem faint. The subject is important, the author writes well and is credible. I admire his honesty and pity his torment – his identity is indelibly stamped by the Camorra by the accident of being born in Naples.

But I wish it were more clearly written. One feels here sharply the absence of the Marxist method. There is an abundance of history, but it exists only on the level of court reports and folklore – it fails to connect with the history of Italy and the world.

Changes occur constantly – such as the rise of Naples as China's preferred port of entry to the Eurozone and

trends in drug trafficking – but these are simply changes that leave everything the same – eternal and immutable.

Saviano is motivated by the highest ideals but feels himself alone and helpless against a system ruled by vice. In his attitude to the romantic aura that cloaks the violence of the Camorra, Saviano walks a fine line. Like a war correspondent, he does not dwell on



individual victims. He makes clear the attraction of Camorra culture to young men but, without explicit moralising, his painstaking account of atrocities leaves any romance in shreds.

He is no dilettante and, recognising the importance of hard facts, he offers economic details in a model way: The economy for Saviano is no abstraction. It is the sum of the struggle of people to

survive. His economics is the economics of blood, sweat and tears. But his human sympathy is an inadequate tool to unravel the role of organised crime in Italian political economy. Theories of post-industrialism are name-checked but explain nothing.

In Saviano's fragmented account one constantly hears mocking echoes of postmodernist pronouncements on history, knowledge and power. History is created by the powerful, knowledge is only ever partial, and power is as diffuse as it is vicious.

This is not true. There are particular historical reasons for the strength of organised crime in southern Italy, to do with especially oppressive feudalism in medieval times, late and limited economic development, and the artificial maintenance of corrupt Christian Democratic government after the Second World War.

The first step in unravelling the empire of organised crime is understanding. For this three things are necessary – intelligence, commitment and theoretical tools. Saviano has the first two in abundance, but for want of the last is reduced to despair.

What we can learn from monsters

Monster Blood Tatoo and Lamplighter

By D M Cornish

Reviewed by Andrew Tait

Two excellent books that bear comparison with "The Scar" by China Mieville. They are pre-steam punk – ie the clothing and technology is redolent of the Napoleonic era in our world. Horsepower is still the main transport, although the lamps of the second book's title are powered by a biochemical reaction. Older ships are sail-powered, more modern are powered by vat-grown muscles – "gastrines". Alchemy is powerful and surgery advanced though brutal, as in The Scar. The clothing and the social structure is reminiscent of Napoleonic-era Europe, with a still-powerful aristocracy, rising bourgeoisie and absence of nationalism.

So much for the similarities, what is different is that the Half-Continent (as the world of these adventures is called) is the scene of a perpetual guerilla war between monsters and humans. There are many different kinds of monsters,

ranging from tiny to hundreds of times human size. They have varying degrees of intelligence and sometimes are endowed with speech as well. These monsters live in the wilds, on the edges of civilisation and, at times, the land itself seems in league with them, exuding a disorienting, nauseating sense of unease and wrongness. The Empire has driven roads through these monster-thronged wastelands and it is the duty of the Lamplighters, a militarised legion of council workers, to keep the roads well-lit for travellers, in the course of which culling and killing marauding monsters. A monster-slayer is entitled to be tattooed with the blood of the beast she has killed – a practice that, for some reason, nauseates Rossamund, the hero of these books.

For all the weirdness of these books – they are set in a relentlessly foreign universe, which is coherently imagined in great depth – the problems plaguing the Half-Continent – of alienation, chauvinism, war and class oppression – resonate clearly in this world.

THE MISBEGOTTEN SCHREWD



OBAMA'S BOMBERS



are no friends of freedom

The U.S. blitz on Libya is aimed at imposing the imperialist order, not saving lives.

The Cruise missile liberals are back.

The same people who criticized George W. Bush for unleashing the U.S. war machine on Iraq are now cheering Barack Obama's order to pound Libya with missiles and bombs.

How do they explain the difference?

The Republican Bush's venture was aimed at furthering the interest of U.S.

imperial power, we're told, while the Democrat Obama's firepower will save civilian lives and promote democracy.

"Assuming that a no-flight zone can be imposed by an international coalition that includes Arab states, we have an opportunity to establish a new narrative of Western support for Arab democrats," wrote Anne-Marie Slaughter, a Princeton professor and a former official in the Obama State Department.

